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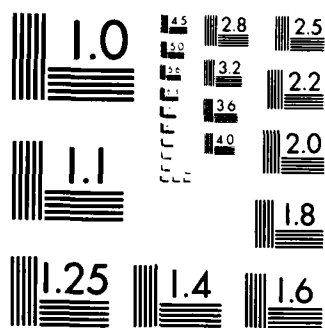
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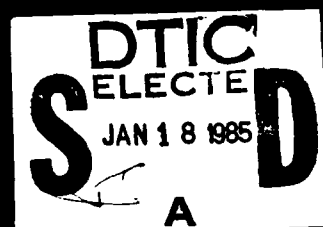
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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

MOTIVATION: A KEY TO LEADERSHIP

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

Lieutenant Colonel Julius F. Johnson
Infantry

US Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
24 May 1984

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR(S): Julius F. Johnson, LTC, INF

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Throughout history the effectiveness of the American fighting man has been tied directly to the motivation instilled by its military leaders. This paper attempts to explore motivation as an integral part of the area of leadership by examining some great masters in the field. The essay centers on the psychological factors as the genesis for motivation, and projects through historical examples prognosis for the future viewing of leadership. It is concluded by this review that motivation is a key to leadership and so is outstanding leadership sensitive to the forces required to generate positive actions, a key to motivation.

In looking at the subject of leadership and how important motivation is to the successful accomplishment of any objective, an analyst is immediately struck by the density of material that has been written on the subject. The natural question comes to mind; why? The answer is all too obvious; for we as professionals refuse to listen to the voices of the past, and continue to avoid their sagacious insight. Therefore, this exploration of the subject will look at the fundamental essence of leadership with a concerted probe on the understanding of motivation as an integral part.

With a major emphasis today in our Army on modernization and expanding technology, the very reason for good leadership can become hidden in the maze of priorities. In reviewing this subject through the vision of several great battlefield captains, it is readily apparent where our emphasis should be directed. In an address before the student body at the US Army War College in Carlisle Pennsylvania, General of the Army Omar N. Bradley provided a very astute observation when he stated:

This is the age of the computer and if you know how to program the machine you can get quick and accurate answers. But how can you include leadership--and morale which is affected by leadership--into your programming? Let us never forget the great importance of this element--leadership, and while we use computers for certain answers, let us not try to fight a whole war or even a single battle without giving proper consideration to the element of leadership. Another element to be considered is the man to be led, and with those morale we are concerned. I am constantly reminded of this point by a cartoon which hangs over my desk at home which depicts an infantry man with his rifle across his knees as he sits behind a parapet. Above him is the list of the

newest weapons science has devised and the soldier behind the parapet is saying: But still they haven't found a substitute for ME.¹

This dynamic insight provides a perspective of the past and a clear signal for the future. However, all too often the concerns of effectiveness in the leadership environment is the overriding consideration.

General Bradley stated:

The test of a leader lies in the reaction and response of his followers. He should not have to impose authority. Bossiness in itself never made a leader. He must make his influence felt by example and the instilling of confidence in his followers. The greatness of a leader is measured by the achievements of the led. This is the ultimate test of his effectiveness.²

Although this overview of the basic fundamental precepts is enlightening, another great battlefield Captain who commanded an allied Army has much similar views. Field Marshall Montgomery in his book the "Path to Leadership" saw leadership as all encompassing. He stated:

Expressed in its simplest terms a leader is one who can get people to follow him. Such a person can, of course be good or bad. We must be clear what is the opposite of leadership. It is 'misleadership' for want of a better word. We can say at once that leadership should properly be exercised by people in authority. What matters is how they lead. When they have no power to enforce their will, then much will depend on their personality, on what they are. In no case will good results be obtained unless the leader is a man who can be looked up to, whose personal judgement is trusted, and who can inspire and warm the hearts of those he leads--gaining their trust and confidence, and explaining what is needed in language which can be understood. It would seem, therefore, that the beginning of leadership is a battle for the hearts and minds of men, and this I firmly believe is the essence of the whole matter. The first approach to leadership should be intellectual, and a definition is needed. My own experience teaches me that the following definition is about right:

'The capacity and the will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which will inspire confidence. It involves a close study of

human nature, it is 'men' that are the factors of reality and importance. The greatest of all leaders known to history once said:

'I will make you fishers of men.' What Christ meant was that he would teach his disciples how to win the hearts of men, implying that leadership has to be taught. While it is true that some men have the character to make leaders, I believe that leadership can be developed by training. In the military sphere, I reckon that soldiers will be more likely to follow a leader in whose military knowledge they have confidence rather than a man with much greater personality but with not the same obvious knowledge of his job.³

As the analyst reviews these two clear examples of the subject of leadership further investigation would seem appropriate if directed toward the genesis. The genesis of leadership must lie in the science of psychology. In order to understand the positive force of leadership and the role motivation has, we must view the psychological nature as the anchor point. This point was expanded on in 1932 when Sigmund Freud wrote:

I have told you that psychoanalysis began as a therapeutic procedure, but it is not in that light that I wanted to recommend it to your interest, but because of the truths it contains, because of the information it gives us about that which is of the greatest importance to mankind, namely, his own nature, and because of the connections it has shown to exist between the most various of his activities.

Psychoanalytic investigation of emotional disturbances has led to the recognition of hidden unconscious motivations for human behavior in general and for its origin in early experiences. These findings also illuminate the motives of those who seek leadership and those who seek a leader. In pathological conditions, this corrective development is impeded. But for everyone there yet remains a longing to find again, or to be, a god-like personage, unlimited in power and wisdom.

To some degree the potential leader fulfills this wish. Thus the leader has to possess real or alleged superior qualities which the potential follower wants to possess. Certain attributes of the leader, such as having been born in a log cabin and having suffered hardships, facilitate identification with him and attenuate envy and rivalry.

The followers wish for a changed self-image; one of greater strength, can be fulfilled only if the leader appears as an idealized alter ego, which then can become a part of the follower. In order to permit this idealization, a selectivity of perception is necessary, and this is often instigated and maintained by the leader's choice of self-revelation.

Freud has explained in "The Interpretation of Dreams" that

what we describe as character is based on the memory-traces of our impressions; and moreover, the impressions which have had the greatest effect on us--those of our earliest youth--are precisely the ones which scarcely ever become conscious.

These early impressions result in sustained patterns of behavior, patterns which are relatively stable and resist change.

In Thornton Wilders "Ides of March" Julius Caesar writes about himself:

Nothing seems to me to be more dangerous--not only for us rulers, but for those who gaze upon us with varying degrees of adoration--that this ascription of divine attributes. It is not difficult to understand that many persons will feel at times as though they were inflated by unusual powers or caught up into currents of some inexorable rightness. I had this feeling frequently when I was younger; I now shudder at it and with horror. How often I have had it thrown back at me, generally by flatterers, that I said to the timid boatman in the storm 'have no fear; you bear Caesar' what nonsense! I have had no more

exemption from the ills of life than any other man and his achievements should be viewed as extensions of the human state, not interruptions in it.

The principal contribution of psychoanalysis to the study of cultural problems has been to illuminate the darkness in the sphere of human motivation, and especially to show the regressive irrational forces, and their relations, which impede the struggle for mastery.⁴

As we are now armed with the psychoanalytic illumination of the leadership foundation, it seems appropriate that we provide some clarification of how motivation is seen. What is motivation? A dictionary definition of motivation reveals the following: "The act or process of motivating, an emotion, desire, physiological need, or similar impulse acting as an incitement to action."⁵

Within this context many noted psychologists have conducted extensive studies into motivational theories. One of the most noted in this science is Dr. Abraham H. Maslow. Dr. Maslow postulated through an analytical process that man has certain basic motivational needs. These needs form a hierarchy in the following ascending order; (1) Physiological, (2) Safety, (3) Belonging, (4) Esteem, (5) Self-Actualization. The starting level of physiological needs, are mainly man's efforts to maintain a normal state of the blood stream. They include; the need for food, water, air, and the basic chemicals; in addition to rest. The safety needs are described as organizers of behavior. They encompass security; stability; dependency; protection, and a need for structure, order law and limits. In the area of Belonging, Maslow emphasizes an emergence of a hunger for affectionate relationships with people in general, and specifically within a group or family. This goal

will have a great amount of intensity until achievement is reached. In the area of Esteem, the focus is directed on the esteem of others, and a need for a firmly based high evaluation of the individual. This will normally lead to firm feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, adequacy, and of being useful and necessary in the world. In all these areas the need for self-actualization is most profound. This is explained as the individual doing what he, individually, is fitted for or stated differently "what a man can be, he must be". This refers to mans fulfillment or the ability to become actualized in what he is potentially. Maslow concluded by stating the following:

It has been pointed out several times that our needs usually emerge only when more prepotent needs have been gratified. This gratification has an important role in the motivation theory. Apart from this, however, needs cease to place an active determining on organizing roles as soon as they are gratified. If we are interested in what actually motivates us, then a satisfied need is not a motivator. If I were permitted this usage, I should then say simply that a healthy man is primarily motivated by his needs to develop and actualize his fullest potentialities and capacities.⁷

In summary the science of psychology reveals man in a constant attempt to gain control of certain needs in order to actualize higher potentials. Now we will address these motivational considerations as they apply to the area of leadership.

In a study of the leadership environment where motivation can be an instrument of success an understanding of the Military Culture can be of great importance. Our military culture is well founded, and much similar, to the European allied Armies. The leadership in the European Armies emanated from the aristocracy, and position and rank usually coincided with a commensurate degree of wealth. However, early in the 19th century democratic political structures began to emerge which

questioned the fidelity and loyalty of the officer corps to a leader who fulfilled the role because he was a civilian head of state. Historian Stephen Wilson in his views on Western Military Culture expresses some observations on passive obedience. He stated:

In the German context, the same problem has been focused on in an attempt to explain the German Officer Corps' acquiescence in the Nazi accession to power and its failure afterwards to resist or remove Hitler. Here it has been suggested that officers traditional loyalty to a leader to whom they had sworn allegiance was in effect unconditional.⁸

Throughout this degree of conflict by the officers a clear division became apparent within the military structure. Thus the distinguished orders of officers, NCOs, and men were recognized for military efficiency. Mr. Wilson states further:

Formalization of the military structure fundamentally altered the relationship between officers and men, introducing a buffer order between them or greatly increasing the size and importance of the intermediary order. The development of this NCO order and its special ethos has received very little attention despite there crucial position and significance. A relatively closed and intact officer corps could not have emerged or been maintained without the existence of this second order which limited and mediated its contacts with the common soldiers. Moreover, the latter's direct contact with military authority in peace and in war was through the NCO. With the development of conscription, this intermediate role became even more important since it formed the boundary between the professional part of the Army and its nonprofessional recruits, who had to be trained and imbued with military values in a relatively short period of time. It could be argued that in this context particularly, it is the NCO above all who embodies the military as such.⁹

Although this delineation of the military structure can be examined more closely for agreements or disagreements, many similarities of both roles and functions can be seen in our Army in the 1980s. In a motivational sense even in the early 19th century the basic organizational structure of squads platoons and regiments were considered to be the formal

centers for cohesion and esprit de corps. It is easy to see that the military culture has evolved with its own particular structure, social composition and, internal system of values.

With this as a basis, recognizing similarities for management by the military in the civilian corporate industries is readily apparent. However using the unique structure and military hierarchy established through history will prove to be an effective means for recognizing the evolution of leaders motivation.

As one views the increased pace of technology over the last ten years and the continuous close ties our Army has with the industrial revolution of the 80s, it is easy to see how difficult it has been to infuse technological change of equipment into the military force. Prior to World War II most industrialized nations resorted to the raising of large Armies to counter a threat by a major adversary. However, with the development of nuclear weaponry the requirement for large standing armies has been replaced by technological advances and detente.

The military leader of today can still reflect on the great military masters of yesterday but for the future he will probably not see many machine oriented historical similarities. The impact of technical processes upon the military was succinctly stated by Dr. Jacques Van Doorn in (1975) when he argued that the old relationship between man and his equipment has been reversed, both in industry and in the military; the armed man has given place to a 'manned weapon' backed by a complex support system. In the modern US Army less than 30 percent of personnel have combat-related tasks, whereas in 1861 the proportion was 93 percent.

The temptation for modern armies to emphasize technology, even when justified by references to the combat-specific need for firepower and mobility, has had the following effect: while the motivational issues associated with manning the peacetime forces (e.g., the impact of the all-volunteer system, recruitment and retention, allocation, the role of women, the military family) have received considerable attention, the human requirements of combat have been given rather less consideration.¹⁰

It appears that with this new major emphasis on weaponry, one could feel that the dynamics involved in the proliferation of war for the future will not contain any high degree of brilliance or sagacity. However, when this subject is viewed through the eyes of Carl Von Clausewitz, a different perspective is attained and maybe some keys to the future can be acquired. Clausewitz was a strategic thinker who spoke loosely of principles to be observed and followed that would facilitate a greater reliance on machines. In 1832 he specifically rejected the notion that there could be any well defined body of particular rules or principles that universally dictated one form of behavior rather than another. As one looks at this maxim, it is apparent why Clausewitz was intrigued with the human interaction or as he stated "friction."

On paper everything is misleading. Units like battalions look uniform and their performance predictable. But they are made up of and led by men, who are anything but units and who are subject to fear, hunger, and exhaustion. This enormous friction which is not concentrated, as in mechanics, at a few points, is, therefore everywhere brought into contact with chance, and thus produces incidents quite impossible to foresee.¹¹

As we project this philosophy into the future we see another key element that Clausewitz projected in his high evaluation, placed on the moral and psychological factors in leadership. As he states:

It is to the cool rather than to the fiery heads that we should prefer to trust the welfare of our brothers and children in time of war. Or, a strong mind is not one which is merely capable of strong

emotions, but one that keeps its equilibrium amidst the most powerful emotions, so that in spite of the storm in the breast, perception and judgement can act with perfect freedom, like the need of the compass in the storm-tossed ship. It is strength of character which best overcomes the natural frictions, doubts, panics and the line of mediocrity.¹²

This then is the essence of the qualities of leadership and the cautions of overt concerns on technology, or combat multipliers; which voices of the past repeat to concerned students of the present.

Framed in these psychological and philosophical concepts of leadership and motivational attitudes one is now led to ask; why do men fight! What is the motivation of a soldier to risk his life. Is it the unit, history, country, leadership, or self-preservation, that is the genesis of the motivation. John Keegan in his book "The Face of Battle," argued that

the writings of Caesar exercised a uniquely important influence upon military thought. Caesar's simplification of motivation issues, particularly his tendency to regard his soldiers as automatons more decisively influenced by their general's inspiration than by individual self-concern, obscured until fairly recently behavioral factors on the battlefield. Until the present century the willingness of the soldier to fight as directed tended to be taken for granted, whatever commanders might say about the need to inculcate aggression, determination, and spirit.¹³

The British General Wavell was quoted after attending the Staff Course as saying:

We did not have enough stress laid on the factor of morale, or how to induce it and maintain it. I think we worked on the theory that the British soldier was naturally brave and there was no need to do anything particular about it.¹⁴

For the most part Commanders during this era motivated through personal inspiration but without much appreciation nor benefit of psychological research on the subject. The why factor which creates overt actions by

soldiers can be viewed as a cost benefit relationship where decisions are made to react to guidance commonly called leadership. The following definition of morale which overlaps motivation can be viewed with some degree of validity:

A confident, resolute, willing, often self-sacrificing and courageous attitude of an individual to the functions or tasks demanded or expected of him by a group of which he is a part that is based upon such factors as pride in achievements and aims of the group, faith in its leadership and ultimate success, a sense of fruitful participation in its work, and a devotion and loyalty to the other members of the group.¹⁵

Using this definition the importance of the primary group that the individual soldier is surrounded by is of key importance and consideration by the leadership. The demoralizing effect that turbulence has on stability and effectiveness of this primary group, be it squad platoon or higher is easily seen. It is interesting to see that the present concept of Battle Buddies utilized by many units in the Infantry today was recognized as important by the British in the Regulations of the Officer Corps in 1800. Sir John Moore taught his Company Commanders as follows:

Having formed his company, he will then arrange comrades. Every corporal, private, and bugler will select a comrade of the rank differing from his own, i.e., front and rear rank, and is never to change him without permission of his Captain. Comrades are always to have the same berth in quarters and, that they may be as little separated as possible in either barracks or the field, will join the same file on parade and go on the same duties.¹⁶

The newly adopted Regimental system in our Army will be a stable environment to reduce turbulence and enhance the pride and belonging amplified in Sir John Moore British Regulation. Many American Army units have exhibited this type of attachment already; Patton's Third Army, "Big Red One" and the 101st Airborne to name a few.

The combat soldier faced with immediate and personal danger must make a choice between overt possibly life threatening exposure, or passive in-action. The ability to which this concern is addressed and directed in a positive mission accomplishment manner is a direct result of leadership. S. L. A. Marshall spoke of this phenomena when he explained:

As the events of contact and collision move men in battle, playing upon their fears and hopes, tricking their imaginations, inviting and then repelling their initiative, confronting them quite suddenly with unexpected prospects of success, dashing these prospects through some queer prank of fate, reminding them that they are mortal and at the same time stimulating their brute instincts, the same group of soldiers may act like lions and then like scared hares within the passage of a few minutes.¹⁷

Anthony Kellett found similar views when he stated:

The ability of a man to extract from others certain forms of behavior often ironical to their immediate self-interest cannot be comprehended without reference to the follower. Men, particularly in dangerous and high-stress situations, desire leadership so that their immediate needs (administrative, tactical, and so on) may be met and their anxieties allayed. Well-trained and experienced officers and senior noncommissioned officers confer a sense of protection on their subordinates by virtue of their military skills; wasteful leadership and high casualties erode the subordinates' sense of well-being. Thus effective combat leadership has to temper accomplishment of the unit's mission with concern for the integrity and well being of the group.¹⁸

Where does all of this lead us. In general terms this review has tried to portray motivation in leadership through the psychological considerations, the necessary sensitivity of leadership, and the profound need for a realization to see through technological screens of the future as a replacement for men in battle. "In war the Chief incalculable is the human will," wrote Liddell Hart more than a century ago.

Despite attempts at prediction, and even quantification, the soldier's willingness to fight--and particularly his commitment to the achievement of organizational goals--remains an unstable and unpredictable factor.¹⁹

The profound precept throughout this review must be; motivation is a key to leadership and so is outstanding leadership sensitive to the forces required to generate positive actions, a key to motivation.

ENDNOTES

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